



SCHOOL BUS, INC.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION "POINT OF CONTACT" **MARCH 2008 NEWSLETTER**

House Bill 1264 Fails

An act to permit certain persons with insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus to get an endorsement on a commercial driver license to drive a school bus.

The SDSTA was working on in this bill which was introduced to the legislature. The bill passed the House Transportation Committee hearing on a vote of 11 to 1. The bill passed the House with some amendments on a vote of 55 to 10. The bill then went to the Senate Transportation Committee hearing where the bill failed on a vote of 2 to 4. This was a huge surprise as five of the six members had co-signed on the bill. Thanks to everyone who helped, supported this bill and made the trip(s) to Pierre to testify at the committee hearings.

NHTSA Releases New Rating System for Car Seats

DOT Secretary Mary Peters announced a new Ease of Use rating system for Child Safety Restraint Systems (CSRS). You may remember that for the past few years NHTSA has published an annual ease of use assessment for CSRS; and the agency claims that as a result CSRS manufacturers have improved harness designs, labels, and manuals. NHTSA has decided to enhance the program by including new rating features (the design aspects that are being evaluated) and criteria (the questions that evaluate the feature), adjusting the scoring system, and using stars to display the ease of use rating. The agency anticipates that these changes will result in a more robust rating program for consumers while continuing to encourage manufacturers to refine current features and in some cases, install more features that help make child restraints easier to use. The seats are awarded an overall star rating, as well as individual star ratings in four categories: securing the child, vehicle installation features, labeling and instructions. It's important to note that the ratings do not indicate how safe a CSRS is in regard to its crash protection characteristics; a 5-star seat is not necessarily safer than a 1-star seat. All seats on the list meet the FMVSS for crash protection, but NHTSA's data show that 70% of CSRS are either the wrong size for the child or seriously misused. So a seat that is easier to use may in fact increase a child's chances of surviving a crash. Only one of the 122 rated CSRS, the Compass B510 booster seat, earned five stars in all categories. Six others earned five stars for overall ease of use, including four booster seats, one forward-facing seat, and one rear-facing seat. You can access the ratings for all CSRS at www.nhtsa.dot.gov

TSA Taken to Task on School Bus Vulnerability Assessment

Following an unproductive meeting between TSA representatives and the staff of the House Committee on Homeland Security concerning the vulnerability assessment of the school bus industry, the Chair of the Committee, Congressman Bennie Thompson, and Congressman Bob Etheridge, sponsor of the assessment amendment, have sent a letter to Assistant Secretary Kip Hawley expressing concern about the agency's lack of action. They note that TSA has little more than six months to complete the assessment and "there is little evidence that the department will meet this deadline." Since TSA staff failed to provide answers to several critical questions which had been provided in advance of the informal meeting, the Congressmen are now requesting formal written responses to a number of probing questions. They ask, for example, why TSA has requested only \$500,000 for the assessment when estimates for a thorough assessment run as high as \$4 million; why TSA has not issued an RFP for the work; what methodology and tools they will use; and how long it will take. They also indicate that this should not be an industry self-assessment.

NCST Steering Committee Recruits Volunteer Army

The National Congress on School Transportation (NCST) Steering Committee met here today to begin recruiting volunteers for the various writing committees of the 2010 Congress. Writing committees meet several times in the years preceding and during the Congress to research and propose changes to the National School Transportation

Specifications and Procedures. Pete Baxter, Chairman of the Steering Committee, is leading the recruitment campaign. According to Baxter, "Enthusied volunteers are the engine that drives the NCST. We are looking for persons who understand the importance of the Specifications and Procedures document and want to make it even better." Persons seeking to be members or chairpersons of committees are encouraged to volunteer for committees of interest to them. Baxter emphasized that applicants must gain a commitment from their employers to support the necessary committee travel, including attendance in Warrensburg in May 2010. They must also have technical expertise and the ability to work productively in a team setting. Persons interested in chairing a committee must also have demonstrated organizational skills, follow-through, and technical writing ability. To volunteer, please use the self-nomination form posted at www.NCSTOnline.org. The form includes a listing of available committees and other information applicants will need. Committee membership will be finalized in March 2008. **For more information, call Pete Baxter at (317) 232- 0891, or e-mail pbaxter@doe.state.in.us.**

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